

Denver Public Schools Writing CBM

Overview

A Writing CBM is a short, simple measure of a student's writing skills. When administered a Writing CBM, students are required to write for 3 minutes on an instructional-level story starter. After three minutes a bracket (]) is written on the paper and the child is allowed to finish writing the story. Students' first three minutes of writing is then scored on specific writing skills, including Total Words Written (TWW), Words Spelled Correctly (WSC), and Correct Writing Sequences (CWS). The entire story is scored on a rubric.

Before Testing

- Select a grade-appropriate story starter
- Review administration procedures and scoring directions
- Distribute paper (lined) and pencils for students' responses
- Get a countdown timer/stopwatch
- Ensure a quiet testing environment

During Testing

Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs) are standardized. They must be administered the same way every time by all examiners.

- Follow directions exactly as they are written.
- If the Writing CBM is administered in groups (large or small), the examiner must monitor students' performance; during the 3-minute testing period, if a student stops writing for 10 seconds, the examiner should point to their paper and say, "Keep writing the best story you can."
- Examiners are not allowed to answer any questions or provide any prompting that may impede with the student's independent performance (errors in spelling, grammar, miswritten words, etc.).

After Testing

- Score the writing sample as soon as possible after testing
- Determine the **Total Words Written, TWW**, by underlining the words the students wrote and finding the sum of the number of underlines.
- If necessary, determine the **Correct Writing Sequences, CWS**, to determine how many of their words are mechanically, semantically, or syntactically correct. Caret marks (^) are used to mark pairs of words that are mechanically, semantically, and syntactically correct.
- If necessary, determine the **Words Spelled Correctly, WSC**, by subtracting the number of spelling errors from the TWW.

Standardized Directions for Administering a Written Expression Curriculum-Based Measurement

1. Select a grade-appropriate story starter.
2. Distribute pencils and lined paper.
3. Say: **You are going to write a story. I will read a sentence, and then you will write a story about what happens. You will have one minute to think about what you will write, and three minutes to write your story. Remember to do your best work. If you don't know how to spell a word, you should guess. Are there any questions? (Pause). Put your pencils down and listen. *For the next minute, think about...* (insert story starter).**
4. Begin your stopwatch and allow exactly 1 minute for students to "think." (Make sure that students do not begin writing during this time)
5. After 30 seconds, say: ***"You should be thinking about..." (insert story starter)."***
6. After 1 minute of "think time," say: ***"Now being writing."*** Restart your stop watch for 3 minutes.
7. Monitor students and encourage them to write if they are not writing by saying, ***"Keep writing the best story you can."***
8. After 90 seconds, say: ***"You should be writing about..." (insert story starter)."***
9. At the end of the 3-minute period, say: ***"Stop. I am going to mark where you were after three minutes."*** Place a bracket (]) to indicate where the student was after three minutes. ***"You may now finish the story"***

Determining the Total Words Written (TWW)

Underline any words that are produced in the writing sample (even if the word is misspelled or is a nonsense word). Find the sum of the total number of words. See rules below.

- Hyphenated words that *can* stand alone: Each morpheme that is separated by a hyphen should be counted as a word if it can stand alone (mother-in-law = 3 words).
- Hyphenated words that *cannot* stand alone: If one or more of the morphemes in a hyphenated sequence cannot stand alone, then the entire sequence is counted as one word (re-evaluation = 2 words).
- Abbreviations: Commonly used abbreviations (Mr., Mrs., T.V.) should be counted as words.
- Story Titles and Endings: Words that are written in the title or as an ending should be counted in the TWW.
- Numbers that are not spelled out (3, 10, 100) or symbols (% , & , \$, #) should not be counted as words.

Determining the Words Spelled Correctly (WSC)

WSC refers to the number of correctly spelled words in the writing sample, regardless of the context in which they are used. Words should be counted as WSC if they can be found in the English language. Incorrectly spelled words should be circled. WSC is calculated by subtracting the total number of errors (circled words) from the Total Words Written (TWW).

- Abbreviations must be spelled correctly.
- Each morpheme counted individually in a hyphenated word must be spelled correctly; if the morpheme cannot stand alone (i.e., prefix) and part of the word is spelled incorrectly, the entire word should be counted as an incorrect spelling.
- Titles and endings should be counted in the WSC
- Capitalization rules: Proper nouns must be capitalized unless the name is also a common noun. Capitalization of the first word in the sentence is not required for the word to be spelled correctly. Words are counted as spelled correctly even if they are capitalized incorrectly in the sentence.
- Reversal of letters: Words containing letter reversals are not counted as errors unless the reversal causes the word to be spelled incorrectly (p, q, g, d, b, n, u).
- Contractions are counted as WSC as long as the apostrophe is in the correct place (if the word can stand alone without the apostrophe, the apostrophe does not have to be in the correct place)

Determining the Correct Writing Sequence (CSW)

A Correct Writing Sequence (CSW) is a pair of adjacent, correctly spelled words that are acceptable within the context of the written phrase to a native English speaker. CWS takes into account punctuation, syntax, semantics, spelling, and capitalization. When scoring CSW, a caret (^) is used to mark each correct word sequence. A space is implied at the beginning of a sentence.

- Place a caret (^) between words that are (1) mechanically (spelled correctly, appropriate capitalization), (2) semantically, and (3) syntactically correct; sum the number of carets.
- There is an implied space at the beginning of the first sentence:
^The^dog^is^big.^ CWS=5
- Pairs of words must be spelled correctly:
^All^of^the^dogs^started^to^run.^ CWS=8

- ^All^of^the^dogs_stratted_to^run.^ CWS=6
- Words must be capitalized and punctuated correctly with the exception of commas; correct punctuation must be present at the end of the sentence; the first word of the next sentence must be capitalized and be spelled correctly in order to be counted as a CWS:

^The^flower^is^red.^ ^It^is^pretty.^ CWS=9

^The^flower^is^red.^ it is^pretty CWS=6
 - Words must be syntactically correct; sentences that begin with conjunctions are considered syntactically correct:

^I^had^never^seen^that^movie^before.^ CWS=8

^I^never_seen^that^movie^never.^ CWS=6

^And^then^the^girl^gave^the^dog^some^food.^ CWS=10
 - Words must be semantically correct:

^John^went^to^the^zoo.^ CWS=6

^John^went_too_the^zoo.^ CWS=4

^My^mom^bought^candy^especially^for^me.^ CWS=8

^My^mom^bounht^candy_specially_for^me.^ CWS=6
 - Contractions: apostrophes are required if the word cannot stand alone without it:

^I^went^to^Beth's^party.^ CWS=6

^I^went^to_Beths_party.^ CWS=4
 - Words with reversed letters are included in the CWS unless the reversed letter causes a word to be spelled incorrectly:

^There^was^a^bad^thunderstorm.^ CWS=6

^There^was^a^dad^thunderstorm.^ CWS=6

^The^dolphin^swam^through^the^water.^ CWS=7

^The_bolphin_swam^through^the^water.^ CWS=5
 - Words written in story titles or endings that are capitalized and spelled correctly are included in the total CWS:

^The^Big^Dog^ CWS=4

the Big^Dog^ CWS=2

the big dog CWS=0

^The^End.^ CWS=3

^The end.^ CWS=2
 - Commonly used abbreviations that are spelled correctly are included in the total CWS count:

^She^lives^on^Grant^St.^

CWS=6

- Hyphenated words are counted in the CWS as long as each morpheme (separated by a hyphen) is spelled correctly:

^My^brother-in-law^graduated^from^school.^

CWS=6

^My brudder-in-law graduated^from^school.^

CWS=4

- Numbers that are not spelled out are not included in the CWS, **except for dates**:

5 dogs^barked.^

CWS=2

^Five^dogs^barked.^

CWS=4

^Today^is^July^7, ^2009.^

CWS=6

- Symbols used in writing that are not spelled out are not counted in the total CWS:

^I^won^a^fish & a^cake @ the^carnival.^

CWS=7

Primary Writing Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs)

- **Prompt:** The funniest thing I did this summer was...
- **Prompt:** The best part about school is...
- **Prompt:** Today I woke up and...
- **Prompt:** Yesterday I made a beautiful...
- **Prompt:** The scariest Halloween I had was...
- **Prompt:** The best vacation I ever took was...
- **Prompt:** The dog was barking so loud that...
- **Prompt:** Yesterday the class went to the zoo and...
- **Prompt:** I was walking home from school one day when...
- **Prompt:** I was walking to school one day when...
- **Prompt:** My favorite game to play during recess is...
- **Prompt:** If I could fly I would go...
- **Prompt:** A little worm was crawling down the sidewalk when he...
- **Prompt:** The dog climbed on the table and...
- **Prompt:** There are many fun things to do at the park like...
- **Prompt:** The best vacation I ever had was...
- **Prompt:** I could not find my puppy anywhere. I...
- **Prompt:** I could not find my kitty anywhere. I...
- **Prompt:** My dog saw a cat. I called out...
- **Prompt:** At the circus I saw an elephant that was...
- **Prompt:** When I was flying on a magic carpet...
- **Prompt:** My favorite toy is...
- **Prompt:** He knew something was different when...
- **Prompt:** I looked out the window and to my surprise...
- **Prompt:** On my way home from school I found a...

Intermediate Writing Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs)

- **Prompt:** I had never been afraid of being home alone at night until...
- **Prompt:** “What is it?” I whispered to my friend, when suddenly...
- **Prompt:** The lights went out and...
- **Prompt:** I couldn’t believe I had been voted class president! My first item of business was...
- **Prompt:** When the alarm sounded I...
- **Prompt:** I opened the front door and found a huge package and...
- **Prompt:** One morning I woke up and sitting at the end of my bed was...
- **Prompt:** As soon as I saw the large dog I knew...
- **Prompt:** The dancer came onto the state and...
- **Prompt:** My day was going bad until...
- **Prompt:** One day in the cafeteria, I saw some food on the ground...
- **Prompt:** The dog looked sick and I heard sirens but saw no one...
- **Prompt:** I looked out the window and to my surprise the world was white. Everything was covered with a blanket of snow. I...
- **Prompt:** I saw the lightning and then I heard the thunder. I thought...
- **Prompt:** Instead of going to bed last night, I decided to...
- **Prompt:** While I was in my bed sleeping last night, I was awoken by...
- **Prompt:** He knew something was different when...
- **Prompt:** Out of a hole in the ground arose a great big...
- **Prompt:** As I was walking through the cemetery I could hear ...

Advanced Writing Curriculum Based Measurements (CBMs)

- **Prompt:** It was like a dream come true when I...
- **Prompt:** I knew I was in trouble when I couldn't find...
- **Prompt:** "I knew it was you!" I shouted when I noticed that...
- **Prompt:** Once the noise stopped, everyone began to look around for what it was. It seemed to be...
- **Prompt:** We arrived at the hotel expecting to be greeted but instead...
- **Prompt:** Number 7 was winding up for the pitch when all of a sudden...
- **Prompt:** Joe and Bob slowly crept up the creaky stairs and knocked on the door of the old house when...
- **Prompt:** The teenagers were hiking through the forest when they came across an old rundown cabin that was...
- **Prompt:** The light shined faintly through the fog, making it difficult to...
- **Prompt:** The clerk at the store was annoyed because...
- **Prompt:** My dog was running toward the President and was about to...
- **Prompt:** I could not sleep last night because...
- **Prompt:** The funniest trick I ever played on _____ was...
- **Prompt:** The waves were enormous and the wind was furious when all of a sudden...
- **Prompt:** When I was swimming in the lake I noticed...
- **Prompt:** As I was coming out of the long tunnel I happened to see...
- **Prompt:** Mrs. Smith doesn't understand. I was only trying to...

Directions for Curriculum Based Measurements in Writing (CBMs)

“I want you to write a story. I am going to read a sentence to you first, and then I want you to write a short story about what happens. You will have 1 minute to think about the story you will write and then have 3 minutes to write it. Do your best work. If you don't know how to spell a word, you should guess. Are there any questions?”

“For the next minute, think about . . . [insert story-starter].” The examiner starts the stopwatch. At the end of 1 minute, the examiner says, *“Start writing.”* While the students are writing, the examiner observes the child's handwriting skills. Indicate their handwriting skills on the writing rubric. If students stop writing before the 3-minute timing period has ended, monitors encourage them to continue writing. After 3 additional minutes, the examiner says, *“I am going to mark on your paper where you were after three minutes.”* Add a bracket (]) to indicate where the child was after three minutes of writing. *“You may now finish your story.”* Allow the child has much time as needed to complete the story.

Student: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Writing CBM: Correct Writing Sequence

Prompt:

[illegible]

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Analysis	Raw Score	Benchmark
Total Words Written (TWW)		
Words Spelled Correctly (WSC)		
Correct Writing Sequences (CWS)		
Writing Rubric	Score	Comments
Content		
Organization		
Style/Fluency		
Language Usage		
Handwriting		

Primary Writing Rubric				
	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point	0 Points
Content (includes focus, development)	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a main idea Has details that are interesting and grab the reader Has ideas that go together Stays on the topic 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a main idea Has ordinary ideas that others may already know Has ideas that mostly go together Stays mostly on the topic 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not have a main idea Leaves out details or details are very limited Has ideas that do not go together Has an unclear topic 	The writing is off-topic or unreadable
Organization (includes order or arrangements of ideas)		The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has ideas that are in order and it makes sense 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has ideas that are not in the best order 	The writing is off-topic or unreadable
Style/Fluency (includes voice, word choice, and vocabulary; sentence structure)		The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has complete sentences Shows an interest in the topic Uses different beginning words for sentences (for example, not all beginning with the word "Then") Has ideas that are explained clearly with descriptive and/or powerful words 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has sentences that are not complete Has sentences that go on and on Shows little or no interest in the topic Uses the same words to begin most sentences Has ideas that are not explained with clear wording 	The writing is off-topic or unreadable
Language Usage		The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has capital letters and correct punctuation in almost all the right spots Has almost all of the words spelled correctly Has subjects and verbs that go together and sound right 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is missing many capital letters and punctuation in the right spots Has many words that are spelled wrong Has subjects and verbs that do not go together and do not sound right 	The writing is off-topic or unreadable
Handwriting (teacher must observe the student while writing)			The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has automatized standard letter formation Properly forms all upper and lowercase letters Has control over spaces and alignment of writing on the page 	The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has not automatized standard letter formation Does not properly form all upper and lowercase letters Does not have control over spaces and alignment of writing on the page

Intermediate/Advanced Writing Rubric

	4 Points	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point	0 Points
Content Organization (includes focus, development, organization)	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets all requirements of the prompt Stays fully focused on topic Includes relevant information Provides main ideas and specific, elaborated details that move beyond the obvious Includes an inviting introduction, logical arrangements of ideas, and satisfying conclusion Maintains a clear order with transitions between ideas 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets most of the prompt's requirements Stays mostly focused Includes mostly relevant information Provides main idea but details are general or brief or obvious Includes a recognizable introduction, arrangement of ideas, and conclusion; ideas may wander a bit; may be predictable Provides some connections between ideas with few transitions 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets some of the prompt's requirements Addresses a broad topic OR focuses on a trivial point Provides sketchy information that may be list-like Begins or ends abruptly; arrangement of ideas is stilted or occasionally random Rarely uses transitions 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets few of the prompt's requirements Severely digresses from topic Includes much irrelevant information Does not provide main ideas or does not support them; details may be repetitious Begins or ends abruptly with no introduction or conclusion; there is little or no attempt to establish order Does not connect ideas 	The writing is off topic
Style/Fluency (includes voice, word choice, and vocabulary; sentence structure; legibility)	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is engaging Uses accurate, precise vocabulary that is appropriate for audience and purpose Uses active and precise verbs May use figurative language, imagery, and/or striking language Is fluent, easy to read Uses an effective variety of sentence beginnings, structures, and length Is readable, neat, nearly error-free 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is occasionally engaging Uses accurate but general word choice that is appropriate for the audience and purpose Uses a mix of precise and general verbs Uses familiar vocabulary and phrases with some striking language Is generally fluent with occasional chopiness Uses some variety of sentence beginnings, structures, and length Is mostly readable and neat 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is somewhat bland Uses general word choice that may include occasional errors in word usage Uses a few active verbs but most are imprecise or colorless (i.e., is, did, go) Uses a variety of sentence beginnings, structure, or length but has many rambling or choppy sentences Is readable but somewhat sloppy 	The writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is bland Uses inaccurate or repetitive word choice that is occasionally inappropriate for audience and purpose Uses passive, colorless, or imprecise verbs Uses vague language or frequent clichés Is incomplete or rambling Uses simple, repetitive sentence beginnings, structures, and lengths OR many sentences combined needlessly Has some unreadable portions 	The writing is illegible

	4 Points	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point	0 Points
Language Usage			Language skills successfully support meaning; few, if any, errors in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent agreement • Modifiers • Punctuation; end punctuation, commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, semicolons • Abbreviation and paragraphing 	Language skills support meaning; several errors in some or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject/verb and pronoun/antecedent agreement • Modifiers • Punctuation; end punctuation, commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, semicolons • Abbreviation and paragraphing 	Language skills impede meaning; response is error-ridden
Planning				Evidence of planning	No evidence of planning
Handwriting (teacher must observe student while writing)				The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has automatized standard letter formation • Properly forms all upper and lowercase letters • Has control over spaces and alignment of writing on the page 	The student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has not automatized standard letter formation • Does not properly form all upper and lowercase letters • Does not have control over spaces and alignment of writing on the page